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ABSTRACT

Four nonmetropolitan South Texas counties were the target areas in exploring the proposition that dropouts should have lower aspirations and expectations than their in-school age peers. Data were obtained from approximately 600 Mexican American high school sophomores and 75 dropout age peers residing in the counties studied in 1968 and 1969. The comparisons were made on the following dimensions of occupational and educational status projections: (1) level of aspiration, (2) level of expectation, (3) anticipatory goal deflection, (4) intensity of aspiration, and (5) certainty of expectation. Tables of analysis show the results of each dimension above. Included in the document is a bibliography of relevant research literature, along with information on the characteristics and backgrounds of respondents and a table showing socioeconomic conditions of study counties compared with Texas as a whole and with the United States. (EL)

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DIFFERENCES IN THE OCCUPATIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROJECTIONS OF MEXICAN AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND DROPOUT AGE PEERS*

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Almost all studies of youth aspirations and expectations are restricted to students and, although this does not provide a representative sample of age cohorts, researchers and others tend to generalize from these findings to all youth. This is a particularly precarious practice in reference to minority groups and rural youth because of their generally high dropout rates from school. Very few studies exist to provide findings on the nature of status achievement projections of school dropouts (Miller, et. al., 1964, p. 82). Furthermore, status aspirations and expectations of school dropouts have never been explored in a context that assures valid comparison with in-school age peers on multiple dimensions of status projections.

We know that aspirations and expectations for job and educational attainment are unrealistically high for all kinds of youth and theories of "occupational choice" indicate that degree of realism of status projections is importantly influenced by proximity in time to decision making regarding job placement. This leads to the proposition that dropouts should have lower level aspirations and expectations than their in-school age peers. The purpose of this paper is to explore this proposition and related ideas as they pertain to Mexican American teenagers, using data from about 600 high school sophomores and 75 dropout age peers residing in four nonmetropolitan South Texas counties (Wright, 1968; Juarez, 1968; Wages, et. al., 1969). We compared the Mexican American students and dropouts on the following dimensions of occupational and educational status projections: level of aspiration, level of expectation, anticipatory goal deflection, intensity of aspiration, and certainty of expectation.

Our findings clearly show that school dropouts had lower aspirations and expectations for both job and educational achievement, Tables 1 and 2. Also, the two groupings did not differ substantially in reference to rate of anticipatory goal deflection experienced, Table 3. While the two groupings did not differ substantially in regard to intensity of desire for job goals, they did in reference to intensity of educational aspiration -- the dropouts indicating generally weaker desires, Table 4. Converse patterns of differences were observed for certainty of occupational and educational expectations: the students were more certain about their projected education and dropouts more sure of expected occupations, Table 5.

In conclusion, within the context of our data, high school sophomores maintained higher level aspirations and expectations and a stronger intensity of desire

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for their status goals than dropouts. However, the dropouts did not experience less anticipatory goal deflection nor were they markedly more certain of obtaining their expectations as compared with their in-school peers. In the main, our conclusions indicate that generalizations derived for entire age cohorts of teen-agers from studies of only school students may be grossly misleading, particularly in reference to aspiration and expectation levels. Of course, the magnitude of error involved in this would be dependent upon the extent of the dropout phenomenon among any particular population.

ANALYSIS TABLES

A. Aspiration and Expectation Levels

Table 1. Occupational Aspiration and Expectation Levels of Mexican American In-School Youth and Their Dropout Age Peers.

Occupational Level	Aspirations		Expectations	
	In-School	Dropouts	In-School	Dropouts
	PERCENT			
High (Prof. and Glamour)	56	16	37	7
Intermediate (Residual)	36	72	47	47
Low (Unskilled B.C.)	5	12	13	46
No Information	3	0	3	0
Total	100	100	100	100
	x^2=45.0, D.F.=2, P<.001		x^2=60.42, D.F.=2, P<.001	

Table 2. Educational Aspiration and Expectation Levels of Mexican American In-School Youth and Their Dropout Age Peers.

Educational Level	Aspirations		Expectations	
	In-School	Dropouts	In-School	Dropouts
	PERCENT			
Low (High School or less)	21	66	32	71
Intermediate (High school plus)	28	18	30	19
High (College graduate)	51	16	38	9
No Information	0	0	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100
	x^2=71.9, D.F.=2, P<.001		x^2=46.1, D.F.=2, P<.001	

B. Anticipatory Goal Deflection

Table 3. Nature of Anticipatory Deflection from Occupational and Educational Aspirations of Mexican American In-School Youth and Their Dropout Age Peers.

Nature of Deflection	Occupation		Education	
	In-School	Dropouts	In-School	Dropouts
	PERCENT			
None	60	53	61	59
Positive	8	7	7	15
Negative	29	40	31	26
No Information	3	0	1	0
Total	100	100	100	100
	x^2=1.3, D.F.=2, P> .50		x^2=5.6, D.F.=2, P< .10	

C. Intensity of Aspirations

Table 4. Intensity of Occupational and Educational Aspirations Maintained by Mexican American In-School Youth and Their Dropout Age Peers.

Intensity of Aspiration	Occupational		Educational	
	In-School	Dropouts	In-School	Dropouts
	PERCENT			
Strong	70	58	86	43
Intermediate	26	35	9	32
Weak	3	6	4	22
No Information	1	1	1	3
Total	100	100	100	100
	x^2=4.4, D.F.=2, P<.20		x^2=84.2, D.F.=2, P<.001	

D. Certainty of Expectation

Table 5. The Degree of Certainty Associated with Occupational and Educational Expectations Held by Mexican American In-School Youth and Their Dropout Age Peers.

Degree of Certainty	Occupational		Educational	
	In-School	Dropouts	In-School	Dropouts
	PERCENT			
Very Certain or Certain	35	52	50	34
Not Very Certain	52	31	45	53
Uncertain or Very Uncertain	10	14	5	12
No Information	3	3	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100
	x^2=14.9, D.F.=2, P<.001		x^2=10.2, D.F.=2, P< .01	

RELEVANT RESEARCH LITERATURE

A. General Overviews on the Dropout

(1964) S. M. Miller, Betty L. Saleem, Herrington Brice. School Dropouts: A Commentary and Annotated Bibliography. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Youth Development Center).

(1966) Lucius F. Cervantes. The Dropout: Causes and Cures. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press).

(1968) Daniel Schreiber (ed.). Profile of the School Dropout. (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, Inc.).

B. Texas A&M Research Papers*

(1968) Rumaldo Z. Juarez and William P. Kuvlesky. "Ethnic Group Identity and Orientations Toward Educational Attainment: A Comparison of Mexican American and Anglo Boys." (Paper presented at annual meetings of the Southwestern Sociological Association).

(1968) David E. Wright, Jr. and William P. Kuvlesky. "Occupational Status Projections of Mexican American Youth Residing in the Rio Grande Valley." (Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Southwestern Sociological Association).

(1969) Sherry Wages, Kathy Thomas, William P. Kuvlesky. "Mexican American Teen-Age Dropouts: Reasons for Leaving School and Orientations Toward Subsequent Educational Attainment." (Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Southwestern Sociological Association).

(1969) William P. Kuvlesky, David E. Wright, and Rumaldo Z. Juarez. "Status Projections and Ethnicity: A Comparison of Mexican American, Negro, and Anglo Youth."(Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Southwestern Sociological Association).

(1970) William P. Kuvlesky and Victoria M. Patella. "Strength of Ethnic Identification and Intergenerational Mobility Aspirations Among Mexican American Youth". (Paper presented at the annual meetings of the Southwestern Sociological Association).

* Copies of these are available and will be sent upon request. Address requests to Dr. William P. Kuvlesky, Department of Sociology, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843.

APPENDIX A

CHARACTERISTICS AND BACKGROUND OF RESPONDENTS

Table 1. Location and Number of Dropouts Used in South Texas Study

Location	Number
Maverick County	26
Eagle Pass	22
Quemado	3
El Indio	1
Dimmit County	13
Carrizo Springs	5
Big Wells	1
Asherton	7
Zapata County	11
Zapata	4
San Ygnacio	7
Starr County	24
Rio Grande City	13
Salineno	1
Roma	3
San Isidro	4
Delmita	3
TOTAL	74

Table 2. Selected Indicators of Socio-Economic Conditions in the South Texas Study Counties Compared with Texas and the United States

Place	Total Population (Thousands)	Mexican Americans (Percent)	Low-Income Families[A] (Percent)	Median Family Income	Median School Yrs. Comp.[B]	Unskilled Lab. For.[C] (Percent)	Agr. Lab. For.[D] (Percent)
Dimmit	10	67.0	59.7	$2,480	5	61.8	38.3
Maverick	15	77.6	58.0	2,523	6	47.5	19.4
Starr	17	88.7	71.4	1,700	5	50.4	41.0
Zapata	4	74.8	65.5	1,766	5	54.6	39.0
Texas	9,580	14.8	28.8	4,884	10	36.5	7.8
United States	179,323	1.9	21.4	5,657	11	37.5	6.0

Source: U. S. Bureau of the Census, U. S. Census of Population: 1960, Volume 1, Characteristics of the Population, Part 1, United States Summary, Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1964, Tables 42, 76, 87, and 95; and Part 45, Texas, Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Pringing Office, 1963, Tables 14, 28, 47, 57, 66, 84, 86, and 87.

[A] Annual family income below $3,000.

[B] Persons 25 years old and over.

[C] Males and females classified as operatives and kindred, private household workers, service workers, farm laborers and farm foremen, and other laborers.

[D] Males and females classified as farmers, farm managers, farm laborers, and farm foremen.

APPENDIX B

INDICATORS AND MEASUREMENTS

Indicators

A. Occupational Projections

9. If you were completely free to choose any job, what would you desire most as a lifetime job? (In answering this question give an exact job. For example, do not say "work on the railroad" but tell us what railroad job you would like to have.) Write your answer in the box below.

ANSWER: [ ]

---

10. (A) Sometimes we are not always able to do what we want most. What kind of job do you really expect to have most of your life? (Write your answer in the box below. Please give an exact job!)

ANSWER: [ ]

(B) How certain are you that this is the job you will have most of your life? (Circle one number):

I am:	1	2	3	4	5
	Very Certain	Certain	Not Very Certain	Uncertain	Very Uncertain

B. Educational Projections

13. If you could have as much schooling as you desired, which of the following would you do? (Circle only one number):

1. Quit school right now. (Never go to school again -- for dropouts)
2. Complete high school.
3. Complete a business, commercial, electronics, or some other technical program after finishing high school.
4. Graduate from a junior college (2 years).
5. Graduate from a college or university.
6. Complete additional studies after graduating from a college or university.

***

14. (a) What do you <u>really</u> expect to do about your education? (Circle only one number):

1. Quit school right now.
2. Complete high school.
3. Complete a business, commercial, electronics, or some other technical program after finishing high school.
4. Graduate from a junior college (2 years).
5. Graduate from a college or university.
6. Complete additional studies after graduate from a college or university.

(b) How certain are you that you will really achieve the education <u>you expect</u>?

I am: (Circle one number.)

1	2	3	4	5
Very Certain	Certain	Not very Certain	Uncertain	Very Uncertain

C. Intensity of Aspiration

27. Listed below are a number of things that most young people look forward to. Rank them in order of their importance to you. For the one you think is most important put a number 1 in front of it; for the next most important one put a number 2; and so on until you have a different number (from 1 to 7) for each one. Read over the entire list before answering the question.

_____ To have lots of free time to do what I want.

_____ To get all the education I want.

_____ To earn as much money as I can.

_____ To get the job I want most.

_____ To live in the kind of place I like best.

_____ To have the kind of house, car, furniture, and other things like this I want.

_____ To get married and raise a family.

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS! You should have used each number from 1 to 7 only one time and you should have a number in each blank space.

D. Ethnic Identification

28. Are you of Spanish-American ancestry? (Circle one number.)

1 Yes 2 No

Original Response Categories

Table 3. Occupational Aspirations and Expectations of Mexican American In-School Youth and Their Dropout Age Peers.

Category*	Aspirations		Expectations	
	In-School	Dropouts	In-School	Dropouts
	PERCENT			
1. High Professional	7	0	4	0
2. Low Professional	43	15	30	6
3. Glamour	6	1	3	1
4. Managerial	4	6	6	4
5. Clerical and Sales	19	23	26	13
6. Skilled	13	44	16	30
7. Operatives	2	1	3	6
8. Unskilled	2	10	4	20
9. Housewife	1	0	5	20
No Information	3	0	3	0
Total	100	100	100	100

*Classifications utilized in analysis consist of combinations of these as follows: High -- 1, 2, 3; Low -- 7, 8, 9; Intermediate -- 4, 5, 6.

Table 4. Educational Aspirations and Expectations of Mexican American In-School Youth and Their Dropout Age Peers.

Category	Aspirations		Expectations	
	In-School	Dropouts	In-School	Dropouts
	PERCENT			
Never go to school again	0	20	1	30
High School graduate	20	46	31	41
High School graduate + Additional training	28	18	30	19
College Graduate	51	16	38	9
No Information	1	0	0	1
Total	100	100	100	100